



**STATEMENT ON SB 975 OF THE MICHIGAN CHAPTER
OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (NASW)**

The Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has serious professional concerns with Senate Bill 975. The Chapter represents 6,834 social workers in Michigan. They work in a wide range of settings, including colleges and universities, school districts, both private and public agencies offering a range of health and social services, hospitals, various kinds of long term care facilities, and private practice. The Chapter believes that SB 975 could have deleterious effects on the programs that train social workers, on the students who are enrolled in these Michigan programs, and on the clients who are served by social workers.

Section 10 of this legislation adds a dimension to the bill that was not present in the original bill—requirements of universities, colleges and educational institutions regarding policies applicable to students, faculty, and staff. Our concern regarding this section relates to the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the accrediting body for many college level social work programs in Michigan and nationally. These incorporate adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics, whose principles comprise the foundation for social work practice. One of those principles includes a dedication to the nondiscriminatory treatment of clients/patients. It is particularly important for students to learn how to work professionally with clients whose views are different from their own. This legislation appears to run counter to that principle and encourage students to “opt out” of learning how to assist clients whose views or behaviors are contrary to ones that they hold for their own ethical or moral beliefs. Opting out of those experiences not only risks limiting the breadth of students’ education but may risk the accreditation of Michigan’s social work programs by CSWE. Should that occur, it would jeopardize the ability of Michigan students to succeed in their careers, both in this state and others.

We are also concerned about the wide breadth of the definition of “health care service” in Sec. 3 (d). Given the breadth of the definition, it seems to include health services such as vaccination or medication. Social workers often work with clients needing assistance in providing health care for themselves and their family members, including their children, and this legislation may create problems in this regard as well.

The Chapter urges you to vote “no” on SB 975.